



**OCTOBER 21, 2005**

## **HEALTH ADVISORY**

### **Suspicious Water Contamination in Washington and Idaho**

The following message is being forwarded from the Highway Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) and Highway Watch® Programs which are operated by American Trucking Associations, Inc. under an on-site contract with the Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration at the Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC).

### ***Advisory Bulletin For Wide Distribution***

**INCIDENT #: 102105- Water Supply Advisory**

**DATE/TIME:** 10/21/2005

**LOCATION:** Northwestern States (Washington & Idaho)

**LOOKOUT/ACTIVITY:** Suspicious Water Contamination in Washington and Idaho

**SUMMARY:**

The Highway ISAC was notified by TSOC Surface Transportation of a potential risk to our Nation's water system. The incident summary listed below indicates that there may be possible intent to contaminate water supplies. As the transportation community is best able to observe suspicious behavior in and around water treatment facilities and towers, we are recommending an elevated sense of awareness. All unusual or suspicious activity should be reported to the Highway Watch Call Center.

At 1300 hours on October 20, while performing routine intelligence gathering TSOC Surface Transportation came across a report from the Maryland Strategic Analysis Bulletin regarding several water districts in the Northwest United States that have reported suspicious activity involving several water towers and reservoirs. In some instances this damage has affected the local community by causing elevated levels of E. coli and similar bacteria and requiring advisories from the state health department to boil water before use.

On September 7, 2005 Spokane East Water District #1 reported elevated levels of coliform contamination that impacted 8 residences. An investigation resulted in an apparent unidentified individual had tunneled under a chain link fence and cut a hasp on the water tower. Clumps of grass were placed over the entrance of the tunnel in an attempt to conceal the entrance point.

On September 28, 2005 Spokane County Water District #3 water tower tested positive for the presence of the bacteria coliform and Escherichia coli (E. coli). The contamination of the water

impacted approximately 4500 residents. A subsequent investigation revealed marks on the water towers ladder and a missing screen from the vent on top of the water tower.

On September 15, 2005 an unidentified individual entered the Soos Creek Water and Sewer District Tower in Reston, Washington by cutting the lock, which secured the water tower area. The individual drove a vehicle around the perimeter of the tank prior to departing. No reports of contamination have been reported.

On September 21, 2005 initial water testing showed E. coli contamination at the Hauser Lake Water District Tower water reservoir in northern Idaho. A subsequent investigation revealed signs of physical tampering at the water reservoir site. Two of the three pipe vents on the water tower exhibited signs of tampering. Fine mesh screening on the east side of the tower appeared to have been cut and bent downward. Screening on the south side had been pushed in, removed and improperly repositioned over the vent. One nut was missing and another was partially unthreaded from the metal entry door at the top of the reservoir. The contamination impacted approximately 106 residences and businesses in Northern Idaho.

TSOC contacted the City of Spokane Water District who stated that the city was not one of the districts that were affected but helped clarify the districts that were. TSOC was advised another incident took place yesterday at the Consolidated Irrigation District #19. TSOC contacted the Consolidated Irrigation District #19 and was advised that a press release was issued to all residents south of US 90 informing them of the presence of E. coli and that boiling of water would be necessary. Consolidated reported that most of there water is stored above ground and is easily accessible. The county sheriffs department inspected the district and found no signs of tampering. The district will drain the 2.0 million gallon reservoir, inspect, clean and test it before being brought back into service.

**Contact:** Please contact the Spokane County Water Companies & Districts Consolidated Irrigation District No. 19, 120 N Greenacres Rd. Greenacres (509) 924-3655.

Please note; District # 19 will provide the phone number for the individual water districts impacted.

**Please call the Highway ISAC program at 1-703-838-1999 or email at [TSOD.HighwayISAC@DHS.GOV](mailto:TSOD.HighwayISAC@DHS.GOV) immediately if you have any further information or questions concerning this incident.**

*Categories of Health Alert messages:*

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

*This message is being sent to local public health units.*